Camp Lick Project

Recreation Report

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Introduction

Healthy forests are the backdrop to a multitude of outdoor recreation activities, and ecological resilience of the forests are crucial in providing a desired array of recreation opportunities (Krieger 2001). Due to past forest management practices, there is now an urgent need to collaboratively engage in ecologically and environmentally responsible, socially acceptable, and economically feasible and sustainable forest restoration projects.

Regulatory Framework

Forest-Wide Standards

- Forest-wide Standard 7: Recognize undeveloped campsites, hunter camps, or areas where concentrated recreation use occurs as being significant in providing dispersed recreation opportunities in a roaded setting. Manage these areas for partial retention (USDA Forest Service 1990, page IV- 25).
- Forest-wide Standard 11: Construct, relocate, or protect designated system trails and facilities during management activities (USDA Forest Service 1990, page IV-25).
- Forest-wide Standard 157: Plan, design, construct and maintain roads and trails to the minimum level required to meet integrated land management objectives (i.e., the needs of all resources). Minimize tie-through roads (USDA Forest Service 1990, page IV-42).
- Forest-wide Standard 166: Prepare and update the Forest travel map annually. Update and reprint the travel map as necessary (USDA Forest Service 1990, page IV-43).

Management Area Standards

The proposed treatments for the Camp Lick project are within the following management areas (MAs): Big-Game Winter Range (MA4A), General Forest (MA1), Old Growth (MA13), or Visual Corridors (MA14), as defined by the Forest Plan. The following are the standards set for recreation for each MA (USDA Forest Service 1990):

- MA4A Standard 1 is to *"Manage for recreation ranging from semiprimitive to roaded modified, depending on ROS objective for adjacent land."*
- MA4A Standard 2 is *"Access by motorized recreational vehicles will be prohibited December 1 to April 1, except for designated routes through winter range which are compatible with the management area emphasis."*
- MA1 Standard 1 is to *"Manage dispersed recreation for roaded modified conditions."*
- MA14 Standard 1 is to *"Manage for roaded natural recreation."*
- MA13 Standard 1 is to *"Provide dispersed recreation setting consistent with adjacent lands."*

Resource Elements, Indicators and Measures

The measurement indicators detailed in Table 1**Error! Reference source not found.**, and described below, are used for assessing the recreation effects of the Camp Lick Project.

Table 1. Resource indicators and measures for assessing effects

Resource element	Resource indicator	Measure	Source
Recreation opportunities	Recreation opportunity spectrum	ROS class	LRMP (IV-13, IV-42)

Resource element	Resource indicator	Measure	Source
Public access to recreation	Safety along identified escape corridors, miles of open road	Miles of open road	LRMP (IV-42)

Affected Environment

Existing Condition

Recreational Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a description of various attributes that contribute to a particular recreational setting. The ROS describes recreational settings in terms of the "combination of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that give value to a place" (Clark and Stankey 1979). ROS categories are used as guidance for the management and future development of recreational facilities. Map 23, Existing recreation developments and recreation opportunity spectrum, in the Camp Lick PEA Appendix B - Maps shows the ROS settings that apply to the Camp Lick planning area. They are described as:

- **Roaded Natural**: This is the setting for approximately 17.85 percent of the planning area (7,099 acres). The "area is characterized by predominately natural-appearing environment with moderate evidences of the sights and sounds of humans. Such evidence usually harmonizes with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be moderate to high with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification and utilization practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is allowed and incorporated into construction standards and design of facilities" (USDA Forest Service 1990a, page VI-28).
- **Roaded Modified**: This is the setting for approximately 82 percent of the planning area (32,668 acres). This "area is characterized by a natural environment that has been substantially modified by development of structures and vegetative manipulation. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is often moderate to high. Facilities are often provided for special activities. Moderate user densities are present away from developed sites. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available" (USDA Forest Service 1990a, pave VI-28).
- **Semi-Primitive Motorized**: This is the setting for approximately 0.15 percent of the planning area (58 acres). This "area is characterized by a predominately natural or natural-appearing environment of moderate to large size. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum onsite controls, and restrictions may be present but would be subtle. Motorized recreation use of local primitive or collector roads with predominantly natural surfaces and trails suitable for motor bikes is permitted (USDA Forest Service 1990a, page VI-28).

Special Features

The planning area is within a tenth of a mile of the Nipple Butte Inventory Roadless Area, but separated by several road segments.

For hunting, the Camp Lick Project area lies within Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Northside Wildlife Management Unit.

Recreational Seasons of Use

Peak use periods are late May to early September, and for hunting from August through November. Camping, fishing, driving for pleasure, and other dispersed activities such as woodcutting, will often continue beyond the typical seasons until snow makes motorized access to the area impractical. During deer and elk hunting seasons, hunting and related camping becomes the dominant recreational activity in the planning area.

Recreation Facilities and Activities

Recreation on the Malheur National Forest is focused where there is water, access to trails, or dispersed recreation. The most popular recreation activities on the Forest are driving for pleasure, hunting, hiking and walking, viewing wildlife, relaxing, primitive camping, and viewing natural features (USDA Forest Service 2010). The Camp Lick planning area is classified as "Roaded Modified" on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (see descriptions above). The Camp Lick planning area consists of:

- Lower Camp Creek Campground, a developed fee campground with six campsites.
- One CXT vault toilet building.

Developed Trails

There is currently half a mile of developed trail, Arch Rock Trail, within the Camp Lick planning area. Approximately one mile of the Nipple Butte Trail is within the planning area. The entire Nipple Butte trail was analyzed in the Magone Environment Impact Statement and will not be further analyzed in this document.

Dispersed Recreation

There are 62 known dispersed campsites within the planning area. Usage of these sites varies throughout the year, with the heaviest usage in the fall during hunting season. Sites are characterized by primitive structures such as self-made toilets, meat poles, rock rings, and log benches built by the users. Dispersed campsites are concentrated primarily in flat areas adjacent to the existing transportation system, typically where water can be accessed. Varied degrees of vegetation and riparian zone damage have occurred throughout the watershed due to vehicles, sanitation practices, and removal of vegetation for various purposes. The use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) is often associated with dispersed camping.

Typically, in dispersed camp sites, where there is concentrated use year after year, the ground becomes compacted and the vegetation is not as vigorous as non-dispersed use areas.

Access

The primary roads through the planning area for accessing recreation opportunities are County Roads 18 and 20, and Forest Service Road (FSR) 36. The developed facility and trailhead within the planning area are accessed via these three roads. There are currently 207 miles of open road in the planning area, which may be used to access various recreation uses, including, but not limited to, dispersed camping, hiking, developed recreation (campsites and trails), hunting, and driving for pleasure.

Desired Condition

Dispersed Recreation

- Construct, reconstruct, and manage trails to protect the resources and meet the objectives of each ROS class (USDA Forest Service 1990, page IV-13).

Developed Recreation

- Manage the following one campground as developed facilities: Lower Camp Creek Campground… (USDA Forest Service 1990, page IV-14).
- The developed recreation areas will be maintained with the proposed activities.

Environmental Consequences

Methodology

The Malheur National Forest uses ROS classes to develop management direction for recreation on the forest. The use of the ROS system allows for flexibility in the application as well as for improved methodology based on experience (Clark and Stankey 1979). This analysis uses the ROS classes defined by the Malheur Forest Plan as the basis of this assessment. The methodology incorporated with the ROS system includes other resources that add to the recreation experience within the planning area, such as: availability and access with roads, trails, silviculture treatments, fire, visuals, geology, fisheries, botany, etc.

Geographic Information System (GIS) information was used to query and analyze data and create maps displaying location of dispersed campsites, trails, big game management units, firewood gathering, and analysis of Malheur Forest Plan ROS mapping and proposed treatments. In addition, field work and observed visitor activities from the recreation specialist are incorporated to confirm GIS analysis, and to provide perspective on local forest activities.

Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis

The spatial context for this analysis is the Camp Lick planning area. The effects to the recreation resources can be short-term and long-term. Short-term is usually less than 5 years, and long-term is 5 years to 50 years.

Past, Present, and Foreseeable activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis

Past, present, and foreseeable activities relevant to the cumulative effects analysis for recreation resource include use, maintenance, and decommission of Forest system roads, prescribed burning, and silviculture treatments.

Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures

Project design criteria to protect recreation resources are included for all proposed actions. Table 2 lists project design criteria applicable to recreation. See Camp Lick PEA Appendix C – Project Design Criteria for full list of project design criteria applicable to all resources.

Table 2. Project design criteria applicable to all proposed actions.

Criteria number	Objective	Design Criteria	Areas, units, or activity type	Responsible person
Recreation-1	Preserve integrity of established	The integrity of established dispersed campsites shall be	Dispersed campsites	Timber sale administrator

Criteria number	Objective	Design Criteria	Areas, units, or activity type	Responsible person
	dispersed campsites	preserved. Placement of landings should only occur at established dispersed campsites when no other allowable option exists.		
Recreation-2	Preserve integrity of established trails and campgrounds	The integrity of established trails and campgrounds shall be preserved. Placement of landings in established campgrounds and trails will be avoided.	Established trails and campgrounds	Timber sale administrator, burn boss

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

Direct and Indirect Effects to Recreation Opportunities

Although there would be no direct effects, the no action alternative would perpetuate existing conditions in the Camp Lick planning area. Seasonal usage patterns and developed recreation would remain the same. Visitor use would be expected to remain fairly level. The Lower Camp Creek campground would remain below "people at one time" (PAOT) capacity during all but the busiest weekends in July and August. Existing dispersed camping opportunities and hunting experiences would continue as they are today. Vegetation would continue to move away from historical conditions, and increasing understory vegetation and ground fuels would obstruct cross-country travel for recreationists.

Impacts such as soil compaction from user-created trails, sanitation issues, and vegetation removal would continue at current rates.

Recreational opportunities in the planning area would not be immediately affected, as there would not be any changes to the existing area. The area surrounding the Camp Lick planning area would continue to be classified as Roaded Modified under the recreation opportunity spectrum.

Direct and Indirect Effects to Public Access

The no action alternative would not directly affect the access roads to the recreation in the planning area. County Road 18, County Road 20, and Forest Service road (FSR) 36 are identified as escape corridors in the Grant County Community Fire Protection Plan, would not receive fuel reduction treatments. The continued buildup of fuel loads would contribute to decrease safety in the Camp Lick planning area by increasing the risk of uncharacteristic fire along these routes.

Recreational use of forest roads would not be immediately affected, as there would be no changes to the existing road system. The long term effect to the planning area could be that deferred road maintenance would continue, reducing access to areas traditionally used as dispersed campsites, or for hunting or other recreational activities.

Cumulative Effects

In choosing the no action alternative, the effects of decades of fire suppression and road maintenance would compound with the present day decision to not take restorative action on the landscape. Over the next decade, vegetation would continue to move away from historical conditions. The increasing understory vegetation and ground fuels would diminish the viewshed, obstruct cross-country travel for recreationists, and diminish ecological resilience. Because healthy forests are the backdrop to a multitude of outdoor recreation activities, ecological

resilience of the forests is crucial in providing the desired array of recreation opportunities (Krieger 2001). Due to past forest management practices, there is now an urgent need to collaboratively engage in ecologically and environmentally responsible, socially acceptable, economically feasible, and sustainable forest restoration projects. The effects to recreational values of insect infestations are similar to that of fire. Study results indicate that less intense fires may have beneficial economic effects, whereas intense fires may have detrimental effects on recreation values (Vaux et al. 1984). By not taking action, the mistakes of the past would be compounded, and the opportunity to mitigate the effects of severe fire could possibly be missed.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

Direct and Indirect Effects to Recreation Opportunities

Recreation developments within the campground itself would remain as they currently exist. The proposed actions could enhance the visitor experience by indirectly improving recreation opportunities that are compatible with the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and consistent with the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Malheur Forest Plan). Under alternative 2, the area would continue to be classified as Roaded Modified under the ROS. Roaded Modified is "area is characterized by a natural environment that has been substantially modified by development of structures and vegetative manipulation. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is often moderate to high. Facilities are often provided for special activities. Moderate user densities are present away from developed sites. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available" (USDA Forest Service 1990a, pave VI-28).

Silviculture Treatments and Riparian and Upland Watershed Restoration Treatments

Under alternative 2, the silvicultural treatment would cover 12,250 acres across 297 units and the riparian and upland watershed restoration treatments would cover approximately 2,700 acres across 198 units. The direct effects to vegetation from the silvicultural and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatments in the Camp Lick planning area are detailed in the Camp Lick Preliminary Environmental Assessment. Each prescription and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatment would open up the understory through biomass removal, which would facilitate cross-country hiking through the forest, as well as enhance viewing opportunities. Ecological riparian treatments and meadow restoration would increase intact hydric plant communities, and promoting meadow functions of water storage and slow release into the late season. Headwaters restoration treatments would restore structural diversity on the landscape. Alterations to the forest structure would affect the movement of wildlife, increasing opportunities for recreationists to view wildlife. Ground fuel and fuel ladder reductions would improve the safety of recreationists at developed and dispersed recreation sites during the summer season. Alternative 2 would have a direct effect on scenery and noise levels from activities such as cutting, skidding and decking logs, piling and burning non-commercial woody material and logging slash, and operating heavy machinery around and within the vicinity of the campground area, trails, and dispersed campsites. These effects would affect the ROS in the short term. Recreationalist would move into other areas of the forest during these activities, but would return to their traditional recreation areas after projects have been completed.

The direct effects of the silvicultural and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatment activities and associated noise, potential recreation area closures due to the activities, and the

immediate evidence of ground disturbances could detract from the recreation experience. The silvicultural and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatments that would occur adjacent to the campground could detract from the recreation experience of camping and hunting if the activity occurs during the hunting season, October through November. However, the long term effects of a cleaner and more open forest floor and enhanced grass growth is expected to benefit the recreation experience. By two to three years after the primary mechanical activities occur, it is unlikely that the change in vegetation would be noticed by many forest visitors. The ground disturbance from the activities, including skid trails, would be much less evident after two to five years. Thus, the effects to vegetation and forest structure from the silvicultural and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatments would have a minimal, short-term impact on the ROS.

Prescribed Burning

Through fuel reduction treatments, alternative 2 would reduce the fire risk to developed and dispersed recreation and the surrounding recreational setting. Although biomass removal and controlled burning may have short-term negative impacts on the recreational experience, severe fire could devastate the viewshed and recreational opportunities, which would have a long-term impact on the corresponding recreational experiences. The activities under this alternative would help to restore historical forest structure, composition, and density, and create more resistant and resilient vegetative conditions. Instead of deferring treatments, which would increase the risk of insect and disease infestations and high severity fire, alternative 2 would begin to address the need for restoration and enhance the recreational setting. Under alternative 2, planned ignitions would take place on up to 32,080 acres, which includes all of the burn units in the planning area. The ignitions could occur during the spring or fall. The direct effect of these actions would be primarily on visuals (see Camp Lick Visuals Report); however, there would be indirect effects on recreation through vegetation enhancement, increased wildlife habitat and safety through fuels reduction. The smoke and activity in the area could also have an effect on the presence or absence of big game. The campground and the area immediately surrounding it would not be included in the ignition units. However, smoke from the burning would have a short-term impact on recreationists in the area when prescribed fire operations take place nearby (units 4 and 22).

Road Activities, Range Fence Construction, and Interpretive Sign Installation

Recreational use of forest roads would be minimally affected by changes in road closure status, as the affected roads are no longer contributing to integrated land management objectives. Approximately 26 miles of road would be closed and approximately 4 miles of road would be decommissioned. Recreational driving would benefit due to road maintenance that would be needed for silvicultural treatments and commercial harvest and from the opening of 3.8 miles of closed road. Road maintenance for hauling could occur on up to 310 miles of road. Additional road activities for silvicultural and harvest activities would be approximately 10 miles of temporary road construction and 125 miles of closed road that would be temporarily opened for hauling (these miles are included in the miles of road maintenance for haul). Those temporary actions would have minimal and short term impact on ROS.

Range fence construction would have a positive effect on ROS because these fences would be designed to improve specific function of the riparian areas. These fences would provide a buffer from non-native animals while providing movement for native animal species. This would increase the ROS in these area as it can increase the potential to view wildlife, hunting and fishing opportunities.

Interpretive sign installation would have a positive effect on ROS because the signs would increase the awareness of cultural and natural resources and inspire public stewardship by fostering community pride in local heritage. Interpretive signage can provide high-quality user experiences without the need for onsite staff or extensive maintenance.

Direct and Indirect Effects to Public Access

Silviculture Treatments and Riparian Restoration Treatments

The silvicultural and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatments under alternative 2 would affect users of the existing recreational facilities during and after the time that the activities take place. Visitors to the area, and specifically those using the campground, dispersed camp sites, water resources, and hiking trail may be inconvenienced by the treatment activities when they occur. The campground and other recreation could have a temporary reduction in recreational opportunities due to the potential for temporary closures during commercial and non-commercial activity.

The direct effects to vegetation from the silvicultural and riparian and upland watershed restoration treatments in the Camp Lick planning area are detailed in the Forest Vegetation analysis section of the Camp Lick PEA. Each prescription and treatment would open up the understory through biomass removal, which would facilitate cross-country hiking through the forest as well as enhance the viewing opportunities during such treks. Alterations to the forest structure would also affect the movement of wildlife. Recreationists would find increased opportunities for wildlife viewing due to a more open forest structure. Ground fuel and fuel ladder reductions would improve the safety of recreationists at developed and dispersed recreation sites during the summer season. Alternative 2 would have a direct effect on scenery and noise levels from activities such as cutting, skidding and decking logs, piling and burning non-commercial woody material and logging slash, and operating heavy machinery around and within the vicinity of the developed campsites, the Arch Rock trail, and dispersed campsites. The silvicultural treatments under alternative 2 would affect users of the existing recreational facilities during and after the time that the activities take place. Visitors to the area may be inconvenienced by the treatment activities when they occur, but these would be short-term effects to the ROS. Planned temporary roads would affect the ROS for the short term. Effects would decrease with time as the vegetation reestablishes in the treated areas.

Prescribed Burning

Recreationists may be impacted by the increased activity in the area, including an increase in traffic associated with the project, corresponding noise, and possible temporary road closures. Spring or fall burning may impact recreationists by creating smoke and restricting access to burning areas. If burning occurs in the fall season, there may be effects to hunters and campers who want to access the area where the prescribed burning is taking place. Hunting and camping opportunities and experiences could be negatively impacted by the presence of smoke. Outside of the times when burning activities occur, alternative 2 would not directly affect access roads for recreationists in the area.

Road Activities, Range Fence Construction, and Interpretive Sign Installation

Recreational use of forest roads would be minimally affected by changes in road closure status, as the affected roads are no longer contributing to integrated land management objectives. Approximately 26 miles of road would be closed and approximately 4 miles of road would be decommissioned. Recreational driving would benefit due to road maintenance that would be

needed for silvicultural treatments and commercial harvest and from the opening of 3.8 miles of closed road. Road maintenance for hauling could occur on 310 miles. Recreational driving would benefit due to road maintenance that would be needed for silvicultural treatments and commercial harvest. In addition Forest Service road (FSR) 36 is identified as escape corridors in the Grant County Community Fire Protection Plan, and would receive fuel reduction treatments under this alternative. The reduction in fuels along these routes would have the indirect effect of increasing safety in the Camp Lick planning area by decreasing the risk of uncharacteristic fire along this routes.

Range fence construction would have a positive effect on ROS because these fences would be designed to improve specific function of the riparian areas. These fences would provide a buffer from non-native animals while providing movement for native animal species. This would increase the ROS in these area as it can increase the potential to view wildlife, hunting and fishing opportunities.

Interpretive sign installation would have a positive effect on ROS because the signs would increase the awareness of cultural and natural resources and inspire public stewardship by fostering community pride in local heritage. Interpretive signage can provide high-quality user experiences without the need for onsite staff or extensive maintenance.

Cumulative Effects

Sights and sounds created by ongoing silviculture and prescribed burning activities, combined with the sights and sounds created by the Camp Lick Project implementation, would not have an unfavorable long term cumulative effect on ROS. However, the open forest structure resulting from these activities would have a beneficial long term effect. The open forest structure from similar treatments, harvests and burns in past and future adjacent projects, combined with the Camp Lick project, would provide increased opportunities for viewing wildlife and other natural features, and create safer recreation opportunities by creating larger swaths of open forest. Creating larger swaths of open forest in the same area could enhance hiking, driving for pleasure, and other recreation opportunities. Although the cumulative road network would have a net loss of miles, the roads would be improved through maintenance that would occur under alternative 2. This combined with the past and future adjacent projects could also enhance driving for pleasure opportunities by contributing to a more attractive road network. The effects are cumulative because more extensive recreation attractions are more conducive to recreation opportunities than those that are smaller and more isolated (Stensland 2013).

Consistency with the Malheur Forest Plan

Recreation under all alternatives meet the objectives of the Malheur Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 1990). Proposed treatments for the planning area are compliant with the ROS threshold as they are within the defined Recreation Resource Element Standard for each of the management areas that the proposed developments would cross.

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